

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

May 26, 2011 @ 6:30 p.m.  
The Providence Foundation  
30 Exchange Terrace  
Providence, RI

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**TAC members present:**

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair	Public Member
Ms. Melanie Jewett Army	City of Providence
Mr. Dan Boudouin	Providence Foundation
Mr. Alan Brodd	Town of Cumberland
Mr. Russ Chateaneuf	RI Department of Environmental Management
Ms. Clarke representing Mr. Kevin Dillon	RI Airport Corporation
Ms. Marilyn Cohen	RI Chapter, American Planning Association
Ms. Elaine Colarusso	Town of East Greenwich
Mr. Robert Murray	Public Member
Mr. Paul Romano	Public Member
Mr. Barry Schiller	RI Sierra Club
Mr. Robert Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Construction Industries of RI
Mr. Everett Stuart	RI Association of Railroad Passengers
Ms. Harriet Holbrook	Representing Mr. Mark Therrien; RI Public Transit Authority
Dr. Robert Vanderslice	RI Department of Health
Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

**TAC members absent:**

Ms. Sue Barker	Greenways Alliance
Mr. Mark Carruolo	City of Warwick
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public member
Dr. Judith Drew	Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Ms. Jane Sherman	Public Member
Mr. Jim Soctomah	Narragansett Indian Tribe

**Others in attendance:**

Ms. Diane Badorek	RIDOT
Ms. Barbara Breslin	Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Kevin Viveiros	Pare Corporation

**Statewide Planning Staff Present:**

Mr. Jared Rhodes	Chief
Ms. Karen Scott	Assistant Chief
Ms. Linsey Cameron	Supervising Planner
Ms. Ronnie Sirota	Principal Planner

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1. Call to Order**

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

### **2. Approval of April 28, 2011 Meeting Minutes— *for action***

Upon motion of Mr. Murray to approve and seconded by Mr. Brodd, the April 28, 2011 minutes were accepted unanimously.

### **3. Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There were none.

### **4. Unified Transportation Planning Work Program – *for action***

Ms. Scott presented all four required parts of the Unified Transportation Planning Work Program. Ms. Scott reported on updates made to Part 3, FY 12 Work Tasks, at the suggestion of the TAC at the last meeting, which included three additional tasks: work with partners to identify carbon emission and greenhouse gas reduction strategies; continue to cooperate with RIDOT and RIPTA on transportation finance reform; and complete implementation reports on the following State Guide Plan elements - Land Use 2025, Transportation 2030, State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and Solid Waste Management Plan. Several additional work tasks were also added including: continue to meet regularly with RIPTA and RIDOT to ensure a coordinated approach to transit planning; to work in cooperation with RIDOT and the towns of Smithfield and Lincoln to initiate a corridor study on Route 7 and Route 116 which focuses on the areas between and surrounding the Route 295 interchange.

Ms. Scott explained that Part 2 of the Work Program outlined the performance of Statewide Planning Program over the past year. Ms. Scott continued by describing that Part 4 of the Work Program provides an overview of the funding sources that will be used to implement all the work tasks outlined in Part 2. Since Congress has not authorized a new transportation funding bill, the dollar figure listed in the Work Program from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is based on an estimate provided by the local FHWA office.

The RIDOT portion of the Transportation Planning Work Program was distributed to the TAC and Mr. Shawver summarized the content of RIDOT's tasks. He explained that RIDOT works with FHWA on the work program tasks which contain certain elements that are required by federal regulations including the traditional transportation data collection. According to Mr. Shawver, this year there is a new emphasis on the proposed Pawtucket train station which was included in previous programs however now there is now dedicated funding for a consultant. There is also a new emphasis on environmental justice. Mr. Shawver stated that RIDOT's section consists primarily of activities required to maintain RIDOT's eligibility under FHWA's regulations. Mr. Rhodes added that further details from RIDOT's program tasks will be available next week and will be sent to the Technical Committee and the State Planning Council before final action is taken.

There were no further questions or discussion.

Mr. Sherlock moved that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) recommend the Unified Transportation Planning Work Program to the Technical Committee and the State Planning Council for approval and adoption. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wood and approved by the TAC.

## **5. FY 2009 – 2012 Transportation Improvement Program Project Status Reports**

- **DOT Status Report** – *for discussion*

Mr. Shawver provided an overview of the 2011 RIDOT Construction Program, as documented in the provided handout. The 2011 program includes projects that have been advertised for construction contracts, previously authorized projects scheduled for 2011, and Roadway Investment – Local Equity Aid Program (RI-LEAP) projects enabling communities to make needed repairs to local roads. Mr. Shawver acknowledged that RIDOT has been a little slow in advertising and moving projects forward on account of the federal funds trickling in slowly. Mr. Shawver explained that the \$146 million available for the 2011 construction program is based upon payment to the GARVEE debt service, leaving Rhode Island with \$120 million in formula federal funding and \$26 million in federal funds from the March 2010 floods. According to Mr. Shawver as of May 16, 2011, \$90 million in federal funding has been allocated to projects.

Mr. Shawver stated that the advertised projects for the 2011 construction season will be ample, however on account of the delay with receiving the federal funds some of the projects will not start construction until the following year. RIDOT is anticipating there will be considerably less funding available next year, with current estimates projecting \$160 million, which would be a significant cut from previous years. RIDOT will be working to have level spending over the next two years and to ease the impact of the limited funds, which will hit the construction industry hard.

TAC members followed with questions and comments. Mr. Brodd asked why a project set for construction in Cumberland was not listed on the 2011 RIDOT Construction Program. Mr. Shawver replied it was already authorized for construction. This listing is for new authorizations. Mr. Romano asked if any of the projects listed are classified as design/build. Mr. Shawver replied that only one project is design/build, the Laurel Avenue Bridge, which was already authorized. The Laurel Avenue Bridge was considered an emergency project under flood disaster funding. Mr. Murray asked if the construction program uses up all of the earmark funding. Mr. Shawver replied that it does not. According to Mr. Shawver, as of two months ago there was \$100 million in current earmarks remaining and they are becoming the number one priority for RIDOT. Mr. Murray next asked if Congress could take away the earmarks. Ms. Breslin replied that there is nothing official and FHWA is meeting with RIDOT next week to ensure eligibility of the earmarks. Mr. Murray asked if there is a sense in Washington that the funds will be taken away. Ms. Breslin replied she is unsure but RIDOT is working to obligate the funds as soon as possible to prevent any possible recessions. Mr. Shawver added that the Rhode Island congressional delegation will keep us informed on the status of earmark funding. Mr. Brodd asked about the status of the Stillwater Viaduct in Smithfield. Mr. Shawver replied that the project is jointly funded with formula funds and earmark funding.

Mr. Shawver continued with the status of the projects connected to the March 2010 floods. RIDOT has created a GIS database for all of the flood related projects, making it easier to

monitor their progress and location. Mr. Shawver stated that he is proud of be part of RIDOT which managed to take care of so many flood related projects so quickly which totaled \$26 million. Mr. Shawver also stated that the construction progress for the Wickford Junction commuter station and parking garage looks great and will be a first rate facility.

- **RIPTA Status Report – *for discussion***

Ms. Holbrook presented an update for RIPTA's projects listed under the TIP. According to Ms. Holbrook RIPTA has used the ARRA stimulus funding to purchase 77 new hybrid buses and trolleys, repave a parking lot, and the continue to move forward with the Providence Core Connector Study. Ms. Holbrook stated that RIPTA is also working with taxicab companies acquiring handicap accessible cabs in all areas of the state, to meet wheelchair access requirements. The funding under this initiative includes purchasing wheelchair accessible cabs, training of taxi drivers, and working with the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to meet their requirements. As part of the terms of the funding, taxi cab companies are supposed to give first priority service to people with disabilities.

TAC members followed with questions and comments. Mr. Schiller reminded Ms. Holbrook that the TAC would like a report on the performance of the new hybrid buses. In addition, Mr. Schiller expressed concern that there are no bus shelters near the busy Providence Place Mall or Rhode Island State House bus stops. Mr. Schiller added that conditions at these bus stops during the winter, with the snow on the sidewalks, were terrible. He asked Ms. Holbrook about the extent RIPTA passengers have into the location of bus shelters. Mr. Schiller stated that people have been writing him with concern that some of the bus shelters on Hope Street in Providence are not as useful as they could be. He asked if RIPTA could provide an overview for the TAC at a future meeting, their process for locating bus shelters, as well as the inclusion for driver and passenger input.

## **6. FY 2013 – 2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

- **Proposed Draft Timeline – *for discussion***

Ms. Cameron discussed the proposed draft timeline for the upcoming solicitation process for the FY 2013 – 2017 TIP. The new TIP program must be in place prior to the expiration of Transportation 2030, which is in August of 2012. The timeline needs to work around TAC and State Planning Council meetings. Referring to the proposed schedule, Ms. Cohen noted that workshops are scheduled for December with proposal submissions in January; however, many town councils are not in session during the holiday period to approve the TIP submissions. Ms. Cameron suggested that if other items on the schedule are completed earlier, the schedule could be moved up to avoid the workshops occurring around the holidays. Mr. Schiller expressed concerned for local public notice procedures. Mr. Schiller suggested that perhaps the TAC should discuss any concerns about the overall TIP process. Mr. Rhodes asked Mr. Schiller if he was concerned about the methods the local municipalities use to notify the public. Mr. Schiller stated that notification may be a weakness on the local level and maybe the solicitation letter can better address the weakness.

Mr. Rhodes invited TAC members to discuss any concerns they might have about the TIP process. Mr. Brodd stated that the timeline indicates community outreach as a four month process and perhaps there is a need to conduct earlier outreach. Good public notice and

outreach will result in better public awareness. Mr. Brodd also agreed with Ms. Cohen that the worst time to hold a workshop would be around the holidays in December. Mr. Rhodes replied that staff is trying to work around the monthly meeting of the TAC and suggested that if the TAC would be willing to meet twice in a month, when needed, it could free up some space in the beginning of the schedule. Ms. Shocket asked how TAC members felt about meeting twice a month if necessary. Most TAC members indicated in the affirmative. Ms. Clarke asked if perhaps it would be more effective if the TAC met more frequently in the beginning of the TIP process to advance the public process earlier. Mr. Rhodes suggested that perhaps some of the earlier tasks could be collapsed and accomplished earlier. Mr. Shawver suggested the TAC form working groups for some of the items rather than hash out every detail with the full committee. Mr. Rhodes thought that was a very good suggestion.

Mr. Walker stated that it is important not to raise municipal expectations considering the limited available funding. Mr. Walker also felt that the communities need to be better informed about the limited level of transportation funding that exists for the new TIP. Mr. Rhodes asked the basic question of what level of funding makes it worthwhile to go out to solicit new TIP proposals. Mr. Shawver replied that it is necessary to complete a new TIP to clean up the list of projects. Mr. Shawver next raised the issue if the TAC would like to grandfather projects listed in the current TIP or if we should start fresh. According to Mr. Shawver, previously the TIP was programmed at \$210 per year however that that level of funding will not be available in the coming years. RIDOT probably will not be able to complete big projects in the state; however they do want input on smaller projects. Mr. Shawver also stated that there is a need for public outreach for the purpose of conveying information to the public on the current situation.

According to Mr. Shawver there is also a need to address the Study and Development projects listed under the TIP. Mr. Baudouin asked if there was consideration of having one solicitation for CMAQ and Enhancement projects. Mr. Shawver replied that he was in favor of accepting all projects and then categorizing them under the TIP programs. Mr. Schiller asked to what extent the towns can downsize its projects listed under the current TIP. Mr. Brodd added that perhaps the Study and Development projects should be reprioritized. Some projects listed under Study and Development may no longer fit with the municipality's current thinking since some projects have remained in Study and Development for seven years or longer. Mr. Brodd also suggested there be an effort to educate the communities. Mr. Shawver stated there was a major education effort in the past. Mr. Romano also indicated that priorities may change for cities and towns. Mr. Murray suggested the option of letting the municipalities submit first a preliminary summary of the project prior to submitting a more detailed application. Ms. Clarke also believed that a pre-submission would make a lot of sense for everyone involved in the process. Mr. Shawver next suggested that the traffic safety and pavement management sections of the TIP be included with larger projects as part of corridor management. According to Mr. Shawver, many times large projects are put into Study and Development but are not built because RIDOT does not have the funding. Mr. Shawver added that the TAC should be honest about the types of projects it can accomplish.

Ms. Shocket asked if the TAC should even conduct a project solicitation at this time considering the limited funds and existing projects listed under the TIP. Mr. Murray suggested verifying

with the municipalities if their projects listed under Study and Development are still desired and then hold a project solicitation just for the small projects. Mr. Shawver pointed out that certain projects may seem small at first however when more investigation is done the cost often doubles due to other factors like environmental mitigation, historic evidence, etc.

Ms. Scott returned the discussion to the concept of possibly grandfathering Study and Development projects by stating that the projects that linger in this category are not necessarily less desired or needed and more often it is the steep dollar figure associated with the project that prevents it from moving forward. Ms. Scott then asked if it is a town's right to submit a new project that maybe now of higher priority than an existing project listed on the TIP for the same dollar amount? Mr. Shawver said the funding does not necessary exist for the project despite it being listed in the TIP. Ms. Scott felt that further discussion is necessary for the grandfathering process.

Ms. Cameron also raised the question of how to ensure that higher priority substitute projects meet all of the TIP selection criteria if it has not gone through the full project selection review process. Ms. Cohen asked if projects that were considered grandfathered, would include only those listed in Study and Development with an attached dollar amount. Mr. Shawver replied that he was proposing the grandfathering concept for the entire TIP and not just for the projects listed under Study and Development. Mr. Shawver added that the Study and Development category does work and that 60 to 70 percent of the projects leave and go off to other funding categories leading to construction. According to Mr. Shawver, when a project is deemed for construction, RIDOT is not going to execute the design if they know the funding is not available to complete the job. Mr. Rhodes added that a project is not automatically grandfathered if it is listed under Study and Development.

Mr. Schiller stated that there have been corridor studies and the TAC needs to keep in mind the state's priorities when reexamining projects on the TIP. Mr. Schiller added that the Safe Route to School (SRTS) program's process of allocating a specific pool of funding for cities and towns to compete projects is a good model to follow and could be used for pavement management, highway safety, enhancement, and CMAQ projects. Mr. Schiller also believes the competitive grant process works well. Mr. Sherlock stated that consideration for safety should come first in project selection process. Mr. Sherlock continued by stating that while it sounds good to have a separate pool for specific projects we have to first determine where the funding is coming from. Mr. Rhodes stated that it is necessary to know how much available funding there will be to work with prior to determining the TIP solicitation process. Mr. Shawver agreed and stated that the first stage is to determine the total funding amount and then allocate it to the various programs. Dr. Vanderslice stated that if the object is to improve and manage the municipality's expectations, the idea of a pre-submission application maybe beneficial.

Mr. Stuart asked if it was possible for categories like Enhancements and CMAQ to disappear under the new federal Surface Transportation Act which is up for reauthorization. Ms. Breslin of FHWA stated that by August everyone should know the categories in the new transportation act. According to Ms. Breslin, the funding programs will not disappear but they will probably be placed in new more general categories. For example, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Enhancements will probably fall under the new livability category.

TAC members asked further questions regarding the proposed schedule to adopt a new TIP and whether July 2012 is a definite end date for adoption. Ms. Breslin stated that the TIP needs to be approved by August 2012 because the state's Long Range Transportation Plan expires in August 2012 and you need to have a valid plan when adopting a new TIP. Mr. Brodd commented that the regional subcommittee scoring listed on the proposed TIP timeline is only scheduled for a three week period. Mr. Brodd stated that he remembered the process taking much longer than 3 weeks as it involves extensive reading, evaluating, and scoring of the TIP proposals. Ms. Shocket added that the process also involved TAC members visiting the sites of the TIP proposals to aid in the scoring. Mr. Murray stated that he recalls the regional subcommittee meeting more than once which would further draw out the TIP adoption process. Mr. Rhodes added that this year the Long Range Transportation Plan needs to be revised therefore any possibility to simplify this process would be helpful.

Mr. Shawver suggested that a working group sit with Mr. Bob Smith and Mr. Bob Rocchio from RIDOT to discuss methods to simplify the TIP solicitation process if the TAC especially if the TAC is not going to go out for a full solicitation. Mr. Shawver added that there should be clear communication to the public on the available funding.

Mr. Rhodes raised the issue regarding revisions to the TIP project selection scoring criteria. According to Mr. Rhodes, Statewide Planning along with great assistance from the Department of Health have started to examine possible revisions to the scoring criteria. Mr. Shawver asked how the scoring criteria would apply to other categories of the TIP since most projects will probably end up in the pavement management program. Ms. Clarke stated that not having gone through the TIP process before, it sounds like priorities and funding levels have changed and the TAC should start from scratch. Ms. Shocket stated that if the TAC started over with new projects, a carefully worded letter would have to be written to clarify why the projects already listed on the TIP were not going to be constructed.

Mr. Murray explained that since \$50 million, or 25 percent, of the \$210 million currently allocated under the TIP must be spent on the GARVEE debt service, there will be much greater impact when there is only \$160 million for the TIP and \$50 million or 33 percent will have to go towards the debt service. Mr. Sherlock asked at what stage RIDOT offers its input on the project priorities. Mr. Shawver replied that once the funds are allocated to different projects, RIDOT can then identify the priorities.

Ms. Breslin stated that this year RIDOT has come a long way in making progress on the bridge program. Mr. Shawver added that he likes the idea of not grandfathering existing unfunded projects listed on the TIP. Ms. Shocket agreed with the earlier suggestion for the municipalities to make a pre-submission with a shorter application for TIP project proposals. Mr. Shawver suggested that if there was a simple and limited application, perhaps it would not require a second application. Mr. Shawver stated that it is very time consuming for both the applicant to prepare and for the state to review the extensive applications that have been submitted in the past. Mr. Stuart stated that if the TIP application addressed the scoring criteria and if the submissions are limited to smaller projects, the application can be different than previous examples. Ms. Shocket stated that the idea of simplifying the application from the community's

perspective is very important. Mr. Murray stated that in the past the scoring criteria got bigger as well as the application submittals. Mr. Rhodes stated that Statewide Planning staff will work with RIDOT and RIPTA on determining a likely funding amount for the TIP, a proposed allocation of the funds amongst the categories, a revised schedule, and the TIP scoring criteria.

- **Proposal Scoring Criteria – for discussion**

Mr. Rhodes stated staff has and will continue to work with Dr. Vanderslice and his staff at the Department of Health on the revised TIP Scoring Criteria which include public health components. Dr. Vanderslice explained that some of the public health components are from a health impact assessment and that some of this information may not be relevant to the TIP application process itself but can help to determine how the Department of Health can collaborate with the cities and towns on their TIP applications and projects. Mr. Rhodes explained that once the TIP funding amount is determined, the scoring criteria can be put together with the revised criteria from the Department of Health. Mr. Shawver commented that any scoring criteria meeting should include TAC members. Mr. Rhodes agreed and stated that he intends to notify the TAC of the meetings.

## **7. Staff Report – for discussion**

- **SRTS Update**

Ms. Cameron stated that last week the SRTS National Course workshop was held in both Narragansett and Westerly. Both workshops were well attended by community representatives and a lot of energy generated by the participants. Next week there will be National Course workshops at schools in Woonsocket and Smithfield. Ms. Cameron added that draft SRTS Non-infrastructure Agreements have been sent to the communities just mentioned as partaking in the National Course. The municipalities will revise the draft agreements with their team after the workshop. Ms. Cameron gave a special thank you to Ms. Ronnie Sirota, Rhode Island Safe Routes to School Coordinator, who did a good job organizing the workshops.

Mr. Brodd stated that the Woonsocket Call newspaper had a nice article recently about the installation of the traffic signal which will finally be built shortly for one of the Woonsocket SRTS projects.

- **Rail Plan Update**

Ms. Cameron stated that Statewide Planning has received proposals from three consultants to complete the state's Rail Plan. Staff is presently reviewing the proposals and is hoping to have selected one of the consultants by mid-June.

## **8. Additional Public Comment**

There was none.

## **9. Other Business**

Mr. Baudouin stated that he is reporting on a favorable development in the General Assembly regarding transportation funding. According to Mr. Baudouin, the House Finance Committee conducted a good hearing on a transportation finance reform bill formulated by the Coalition for Transportation Choice (CTC). Many people testified in support of this bill. The CTC submitted ample documentation for this legislation which would lay the foundation for a

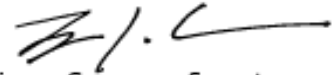


transportation trust fund. Mr. Baudouin asked that members contact their representatives to pass the bill. Mr. Shawver stated there is a meeting of the Senate Committee on Sustainable Transportation Funding on May 27 at 9 a.m.

#### **10. Adjournment**

Upon motion of Mr. Shaver seconded by Ms. Shocket, the TAC unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Cameron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Linsey Cameron, Secretary